

THE THEME OF PARTITION IN KHUSWANT SINGH'S NOVEL TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to find out the effect of partition on the Indian subcontinent after the independence of India in 1947. It also shows that how seeds of hatred sown due to colonization led not only to death and destruction but also division of the sub-continent on not only on communal but also sectarian lines.

KEYWORDS: Carnage, Communal, Partition, Muslims, Sikhs, Sectrian

INTRODUCTION

The partition of Indian was the process of dividing the sub-continent along sectarian lines, which took place in 1947 as India gained its independence from British Empire. The northern part predominantly Muslim, became nation of Pakistan and the southern predominantly Hindu became the republic of India, the partition however devastated both India and Pakistan as the process claimed many lives in riots, rapes, murders and looting. The two countries began their independence with ruined economies and lands without an established, experienced system of government, not only this but also about 15 million people were displaced from their homes.

The partition of India was an important event not only in the history of the Indian subcontinent but in world history. Its chief reason was the communal thinking if both hindus and muslims; but the circumstances under which it occurred made it one of the saddest event of the history of India. No doubt, the Hindus and the Muslims were living together since long but they feuled to enculcate the feelings of harmony and unity among themselves. The fanatic leaders of both communities played a prominent role in stoking the fire of communalism. The partition was exceptionally brutal and large in scale and unleashed misery and loss of lives and property as millions of refugees fled either Pakistan or India Kush want Singh's name is bound to go down in India literary history as one of the finest historian and novelist, a forth wright political commentator and an out standing observer and social critic.

He is known as one of india's distinguished men of letters with an international reputation, lesides, being a significant post coloncal writerin English language besides he is known for his clear – cut secularism, wit and a deep passion for poetry. His assessment and comparison of social and behavioral traits of people from India and west is full of outstanding wit. In July 2000, he was conferred the “honest man of the years Award” by the sulalsh international social service organization for his courage and honesty in his “brilliant incisive writing” at the award ceremony the them chief minister of Andhra Pradesh described him a “humovrous writer and incorrigible believer in human goodness with a devil may-care attitude and a courageous mind; the Indian External offairs minister said that the the secret of Kush Want Singh's success lay in his learning and discipline believed the “vener of superficipline believed the “verneer of superficially”, Kush Want singh has worldwide readership.

He has written for almost all major national and international newspaper in India a Abroad, he's had numerous radio appearances at home and internationally and has an extra – or demary career as a writer. His book, “A history of Sikhs”, remains of the siks he has also written several novels, both fietion and non fiction, which have been translated into

fiction which have been translated into many languages. His novel 'train to Pakistan' won him international acclaim and Grove Press Award in 1954, he is best selling author of over 80 English publications. Indian today described him as 'the capital's best known living monument'; Khushwant Singh was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974. Ten years later, in an act of courage on June 8, 1984, a day after the attack on the Golden Temple, he drove to Rashtrapati Bhavan and returned the framed citation. To the president of India Giani Zail Singh, also a Sikh in protest of the storming of the Golden Temple, however, in 2007 India government awarded Singh an even more prestigious honor, the Padma Vibhushan. In short Khushwant Singh is a man larger than life – a lawyer, diplomat, critic, Journalist, novelist, historian, naturalist and a politician. All rolled into one.

THEME OF PARTITION IN TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Khushwant Singh's novel 'train to Pakistan' brings forth a picture of the horrors enacted on the Indo-Pakistan border during the partition days of August 1947. It tells the tragic tale of the partition of India and Pakistan and the events that followed which will be remembered as one of the blackest chapters of human history. Just on the eve of independence, India was partitioned causing a great upheaval in the whole continent. Independence brought in its wake one of the bloodiest carnages in the history of India. The upshot of this was that twelve million had to flee their home; nearly half a million were killed. The harrowing and spine-chilling events of 1947 had shaken the faith of the people in the innate human beings. It had driven them into a state of wonder over what man has made of man. To Khushwant Singh this was a period of great disillusionment and crisis of values, a distressing and disintegrating period of his life.

The beliefs he had cherished all his life were shattered. Giving vent to his inner struggle and agony, he says: 'the beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man but the division of India has been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country. The says, I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and nonviolent that we were concerned with matters of the spirit while rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of autumn 1947, I became an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shake his disenchantment with the world.. I decided to try my hand at writing. The senseless and venomous impact of partition and the indignation it spawned on him has been realistically expressed in scathing attack in 'train to Pakistan'. Originally entitled *Mano Majra*.

The novel portrays with hold and unrelenting realism the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the turbulent and fateful days that preceded and followed the partition of British India when spirit of communal frenzy and passionate zeal for self – expression was fanning and fumbling with the masses. Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one could remain aloof; no one could be trusted to be impartial. It is true that partition touched the whole country and Singh's attempt in the novel is to see events from the point of view of the people of *Mano Majra* a small village which is considered to be the backdrop of this novel. As P.C. Car writes. Singh weaves a narrative around life in this village, making the village a microcosm representing a larger world".

Khushwant Singh recreates a tiny village in the Punjabi countryside and its people in that fateful summer, when the flood of refugees and the inter – communal blood letting from Bengal to the North West Frontier at last touches them. Many ordinary men and women are bewildered victims and torn apart. The most heart – rending passage in the book is when the government makes the decision to transport all the Muslim families from *Mano Majra* to Pakistan. The dumbstruck villagers are overtaken by events.

The Muslims leave with the barest minimum of their meager belongings within ten minutes and the non – Muslim neighbors do not get a chance to say goodbye. The entire scene is painful at many levels; particularly the poverty in which

these people lived the uncertainty they were thrown into and the eclipse of people's humanity. *Train to Pakistan* is Khuswant Singh's supreme achievement. It is one of the finest realistic novels of post world war II Indo Anglian fiction. It has a well thought out structure, a well conceived plot, an absorbing narrative and beautifully portrayed characters. It has many notable features – symbolic framework, meaningful atmosphere and a powerful way of expression and style.

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